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ASLEF *Journal*

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SQUASH: praying for improvements on the 319!
PENSIONS: no 'broad church' approach
SCOTLAND: not on its knees after the elections



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TURKEY RATING FOR THIS FILM



I OFTEN look through reviews of new films and think the best thing about cinema is that you don't have to go. This view has been reinforced at the news of the release next month of 'Three And Out'. It claims to be a hilarious comedy. It's about a driver whose train has run over two suicides.

I'm not normally accused of lacking a sense of humour, but I really can't find anything amusing about people so distressed that they are driven to suicide. And, having witnessed it myself, I know the life-changing trauma that drivers can suffer when they have been involved in an incident like this: the self-examination, the undeserved but inevitable sense of guilt and the constant anxiety about another similar incident.

Is this really the best material for a film comedy that the industry can come up with?

The plot is almost equally depressing. The driver, it seems, is told about the 'three and out' rule. According to the publicity blurb, 'If you have three fatal accidents within a month, you're out of a job ... but with a huge pay off.' So the 'hero' sets out to find another suicide victim. If he finds one he will be given 'enough cash to pay off his debts and retire to a Scottish idyll'.

Have you ever heard such nonsense? Clearly whoever wrote it knows nothing about train drivers and even less about their conditions. I'm mystified why writers choose subjects about which they're entirely ignorant.

So, you may ask – does it matter? After all, it's only a film – and I can't imagine it's going to make the Oscars. Before you have time to say 'pile of old rubbish' it will be out of the cinemas and into the DVD remainder boxes of rental shops.

But it does matter. It matters to me – and to the industry – that train drivers are respected for their work. If the vehicle you're travelling in has a callous, self-seeking half-wit at the wheel, you're going to look for another form of transport. And the notion that train drivers are unmoved at finding a corpse under the wheels of their trains, and that their first thought is, 'How can I gain from this?' is insulting and foolish.

How would these writers and producers react to a film that had a good laugh at a form of cancer they could pick up from keyboards? Or to a hilarious skit about acute spinal pain they can get for sitting too long at desks?

We'll never know, of course. Because we are too aware of other workers' concerns to consider mocking the most disturbing hazard they can face at work.

KEITH NORMAN
GENERAL SECRETARY

New procedure agreed at First Great Western

Steve Davies of the FGW company council explains an improved agreement ...

One of the many fundamentally erroneous working practices in FGW that we were determined to correct was the Specially Monitored Driver procedure. This process generated points for individual drivers - and points did not make prizes! Accumulate enough and your driving career could be at an end.

Some managers tried to argue that the system was needed to maintain driving standards - but its many failings led to the process becoming totally discredited.

For example, under the procedure introduced in October 2005, points could be allocated in circumstances where the driver had no possible control - and could lead to a newly qualified driver immediately receiving 12 points. Any driver involved in a fatality would be allocated points. Any driver over 50 with a 'negative attitude' who was deemed 'accident prone' would accumulate 7 points. Ironically up to 20 points could be allocated to a driver with welfare problems - which of course would be counterproductive.

The process had no appeal or representational entitlements.

This is now being swept aside with the introduction of a new detailed agreement - the Competence Development Process (CDP). It is based on the good work carried out by our Scotrail colleagues, it doesn't have points and it aims to assist, not to penalise drivers.



It will not be applied at all in certain circumstances.

In more serious cases the driver will be entitled to representation at two separate stages of the process and a nominated Driver Divisional Council (DDC) representative will form part of the mandatory review panel.

Supervision of the system will be removed from Train Crew Managers - who under the FGW management structure may have never driven a train! Instead it will be allocated to the Driver Competency management team (who are all qualified ex-drivers). A new Care and Support System will provide drivers with all necessary assistance in relation to health and welfare issues. We've ensured that FGW driver local reps will be trained on the new procedures - and all drivers will be briefed on its operation.

ASLEF is 'encouraging' the company to take a more enlightened approach to many driver-related issues - with the invaluable support of our regional organiser Stan Moran and EC members Simon Weller and Nigel Gibson.



State ownership for Chiltern Rail!

THE good news: Chiltern Railways it to be taken into state ownership! The bad news? It's the German state!

Deutsche Bahn (DB) is buying Chiltern Railways' owner Laing Rail from civil engineering group John Laing for an undisclosed sum. As DB is the state-owned German National Railways a private UK passenger rail franchise will become state-owned.

'It's a pity it's the wrong state,' said ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman.

The German state rail operator said Chiltern - which runs trains from London Marylebone to Aylesbury, Warwick and Birmingham under a 20-year franchise - would become part of its regional and local services operator DB Regio AG.

The acquisition also includes Laing's stakes in the London Overground Rail Operations Ltd (LOROL) commuter rail concession and in the Wrexham, Shropshire & Marylebone Railway Co (WSMR), which has won regulatory approval to begin running train services from Wrexham to London this spring.

DB says that despite its new acquisitions, it prefers an integrated railway such as Germany's, where one company runs trains and infrastructure on most of the network.

Longer road vehicles: what is the delay?

KEITH NORMAN says he is getting 'seriously annoyed' at the government's refusal to come up with a definitive decision to rule out a trial of monster trucks of 60 tonnes onto UK roads. 'Every day's delay raises suspicions that the Department for Transport isn't being straight with us. I can't understand what they are up to,' he says. 'It's not exactly a complex decision.'

Keith's irritation is shared by MP Alan Simpson. He asked transport minister Jim Fitzpatrick when an announcement would be made - and received the following reply:

'The study was actually commissioned in October 2006 and the full report should be published by the end of February. At



present, we do not intend to publish a response, but following speculation in the media about the Government allowing trials of 'super' lorries, the Secretary of State has previously made clear that we are sceptical of these vehicles and have no plans to permit them in the UK.'

'Then why don't they come out and say 'No'? Keith asks. 'There's no obligation for ministers to be slippery.'

PENSIONS - A CENTURY ON ...

THE National Pensioners Convention wants trade unionists to contact Members of Parliament 'to justify their lack of action on pensions'. To back up the retired people's case they have provided the following facts:

1908

- Non-contributory pension
- Payable to men and women at 70
- 5 shillings a week: represented between 20-25% of average earnings
- Means-tested and based on character

2008

- Contributory pension
- Payable to men and women at 65 in 2024 and rising to 68 by 2044
- £90.70 a week: represents around 15% of average earnings
- Pension not means-tested, but means-testing still exists for those who need additional income

Waterloo sunset for SWT over taxi claim!

UNION members at Waterloo secured a landmark victory last month when a Tribunal ruled that South West Trains have been wrong to refuse to pay tax on the 'benefit in kind' when it provided taxis for drivers on early and late turns.

'This decision completely vindicates the industrial action we took last year,' says regional organiser Graham Morris. 'Our members at Waterloo took 8 days action because they were

adamant that they should not have to pay tax for using a taxi when they had no other choice.

'Our members use a taxi when they need to. They don't expect to have to pay the revenue for a benefit they don't actually want!'

Graham believes this decision ensures that all Waterloo drivers who were in post in 2003 – when a local agreement was struck – are entitled to have their tax paid on taxi use.

The union took a test case to an Employment Tribunal. Retired driver Bob Parker volunteered to be the named individual – and the Tribunal decided that SWT were in breach of his contract. It has ordered the company to pay him almost £1,000 in money owed to him.

In order to end the industrial action and settle the dispute, the company agreed to the case being referred to the Tribunal, undertaking to accept the

outcome. Because of this, the Tribunal ruled that it was not appropriate for SWT to concede an uplift on the compensation.

General Secretary Keith Norman said, 'It is a lesson to us all that a group of ASLEF members who are determined and united are capable of successfully challenging employers. I offer my congratulations to all involved, and especially those I met on the picket line last year.'

Public picks up £1.7 billion Metronet bill

KEITH NORMAN says that news that the taxpayer will have to find £1.7 billion for the incompetence of the failed rail maintenance company Metronet 'underlines the utter folly of public-private partnerships (PPP) within the rail industry'.

'The taxpayer is being squeezed for £1.7 billion because Metronet was incapable of doing its job,' Keith says. 'Contrast this with how train drivers would be treated if they were shown to be incompetent. They'd be given nothing – except the sack.'

'The logic is inescapable. Either Metronet investors should get nothing – or an incompetent driver should be handsomely rewarded for his or her failings.'

The £1.7 billion will be paid to investors who lent money to the company which went into administration last July.

Transport secretary Ruth Kelly said the funding to investors 'carries forward our commitment to modernising and



extending the capital's public transport system'. Keith Norman says it rather underlines the government's commitment to PPP and horror at the concept of public ownership.

'I cannot see why the public should pay for failed private companies,' Keith says. 'There used to be complaints about inefficiency of public services – but so long as they are private there appears to be no criticism at all!'

The union points out that before rail privatisation, the level of subsidy was £1.2 billion a year. Today that figure is £6.3 billion a year. 'Is this supposed to be progress?' Keith asks.

Short Rails

WHY DO YOU WANT TO KNOW THAT?



A recent Parliamentary question to rail minister Ruth Kelly came from Denis MacShane, MP for Rotherham. He wanted to know 'her policy on changing the names of London railway stations'. And then Norman Baker, MP for Lewes, wanted to know 'the average weight of a two-car train in (a) 1985, (b) 1997 and (c) 2006'. Why?

'BORIS IS KEN'S SECRET WEAPON!' CLAIMS GS



London Mayor candidate Boris Johnson suddenly perked up with the strange quote last month that, 'The thumb of the out of touch union leadership needs to be removed from the windpipe of the London commuter once and for all.'

'What is he going on about?' Keith asked. 'I'm convinced he's working for Ken Livingstone!'

CHINA TO EUROPE RAIL FREIGHT

A new freight route has opened which links Europe and China. Pending viability studies, container trains from China could start arriving in Hungary once a week from February and five times a week from the summer.

4-day week debate goes into cyberspace!

Last September the vice-president of the EC, Tosh McDonald, wrote an article entitled 'Four Day Week: Have we or haven't we?' There was some criticism of his views in the October issue, Tosh replied in January and now he and Andy Parr continue to exchange valuable opinions.

While it is a fascinating subject, the arguments are too detailed and localised to continue in the limited space available in Journal – so we have moved the discussion to the Discussion Forum in the members' section of the ASLEF website.

To join the debate or just see

the arguments raised, this is what you need to do:

Go to the ASLEF website (www.aslef.org.uk)

Click on the 'My ASLEF Log In' button on the top panel

When asked, key in your ASLEF membership number and password (assuming you have already registered).

This generates a new menu. Click on My ASLEF and then the 'ASLEF discussion forum' link.

You're now ready to take notes, join in – or log off!

Let the debate continue!

(If you have difficulties logging on, please contact the union's web editor Sarah Francis on sfrancis@aslef.org.uk)

Disappointment as Railway Pensions Commission releases its final report

THE Rail Pensions Commission – which was set up in 2006 in response to the threat of industrial action by all the rail unions – has released its final report. ASLEF's first reaction is 'acute disappointment' that it has failed to meet any of the key demands made jointly by the rail unions.

ASLEF had 4 key objectives on pensions. These were to

- cap all employee contributions to 10.56% (the rate of contribution under the British Rail Scheme)
- keep all benefits at their current level and ensure no reduction in pension provision.
- streamline the current pension provision in the industry from 103 schemes to 3.
- ensure that all employees have access to the scheme.

General Secretary Keith Norman said the union's initial reaction is one of disappointment that the long-awaited report 'does not address itself to these major issues we raised with the Commission.'

ASLEF is campaigning to ensure that rail pension schemes remain effective and ensure the wellbeing of our members in retirement. Many of the 103 separate schemes set up to replace the single BR scheme have come under attack by the rail operators.

Some of the proposals in the Report appear attractive on the surface. It has, for example, suggested a contribution rate of 8% for members and 12% for the employers with a cap on member's contributions at 10%. However, we would be expected to accept much reduced pension payments for this – including accepting pension linked to a 'career average' rather than a final salary. It contains no plans to reduce the number of schemes or keep current benefit levels for new employees.

'ASLEF will continue to push for the pension provision that rail workers deserve. Our four original objectives define what we mean by this,' Keith Norman says.

AFFORDABILITY

The Commission's recommendations are split in to three criteria; affordability, sustainability and equity.

On affordability the Commission claims that a scheme providing the current benefits of the RPS cannot be afforded in the long term. It says joint



THE COMMISSIONERS: Left to right: Bryn Davies, Jeannie Drake, Peter Thompson

future contribution rates would have to be around 30% of section pay – and there would have to be deficit contributions. The Commission recommends we accept a worse scheme and cut contributions to 20%, with the employer's share at 12% cent and the member's at 8%.

SUSTAINABILITY

The Commissioners say the sustainability of the new scheme depends on the continuation of a shared cost arrangement with protections for both employers and members against rising costs. This would involve a calibration mechanism to deal with demographic changes such as improvements in anticipated mortality and a cap on members' contributions of 10% of section pay.

EQUITY

The Report argues that benefits should be reduced by calculating pensions on the member's earnings over the whole of their pensionable service – rather than based on final earnings. It argues that this 'allocates available resources in a more equitable way than a final pay scheme with the same joint contribution rates'.

OTHER PROPOSALS

Other proposals include

- Ending the British Railways Additional Superannuation Scheme (BRASS)
- For members joining after privati-

sation, no benefits until age of 65 and contributions to be based on the cost of provision of the amended benefit structure; and

- For new joiners, a scheme called the Railways Pension Scheme (with average career revalued earnings) with a pension on retirement at 65 of one-fiftieth of the member's revalued average earnings for each year of pensionable service, with annual earnings revalued in line with the Retail Prices Index (RPI), and the ability to convert part of the pension to a lump sum.

The Commissioners want to close the RPS to new members and keep the new arrangements financially separate, and they call on employers to take on greater responsibility for pensioner and deferred member risk in their closed RPS sections for funding any deficit arising from those liabilities.

EXECUTIVE CONSIDERS RESPONSE

The union's executive is considering its response to the document in detail as this edition of the Journal goes to press, but Keith Norman says that many of the proposals 'vary only to the degree to which ASLEF disagrees with them'.

'The Commission has not responded to the four questions it was required to address,' Keith says. 'If you do an exam at school and don't answer the question – you fail. We are not any closer to a solution than when the Commission was established back in 2006.'

Insurance claim?...

Me? I'll stick to ASLEF and Thompsons



*"My insurance company took £200 off me.
Thompsons got me a cheque for £3000 for my injuries"*

Tosh McDonald, ASLEF Member

Photo: Els Dekker

In June 2006 I was hit and injured by a builders lorry at a roundabout whilst on my motorbike.

My insurance company just took the £200 excess off me and paid for the repairs. Because the lorry driver denied it was his fault the insurance company didn't bother trying to reclaim it so the buck would have stopped with me. I could have lost my no claims discount and never seen my excess again.

Thompsons took up my case, free of charge, all part of my ASLEF benefits and I not only got my £200 back and my no claims bonus re-instated, they got me a cheque for £3,000 from the lorry drivers insurance company, for my injury.

Thompsons provided me with a **free claims service** and **100% of my compensation**.

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SECOND SUCCESSFUL 'CHARTER FOR WOMEN' CONFERENCE

THE second Charter for Women Conference took place at the Black Country Living Museum in Tipton on 9 February. The major item for discussion was how to move the Charter forward – and how to garner further support for its demands in the labour and trade union movement.

The Conference was opened by Mary Davis, Professor of Labour History at London Metropolitan University. She welcomed the 100 or so delegates and explained the role of the Charter for Women Steering Group.

Mary explained that some of the bigger

unions have not signed up to the Charter. This is because the Steering Group insists that the Charter remains independent – and does not come under the control of any one group or affiliated organisation.

Kat Stark, the National Union of Students Women's Officer brought greetings from the NUS and spoke about the experience of young women in today's labour market. Many young people believe that with all the equality legislation around, women have full equality – 'But you don't have to venture very far in the labour market to discover that this is not the case,' she said. Young

women are still massively discriminated against in terms of pay and opportunities.

After lunch ASLEF's equalities adviser Sharon Allen gave a well-received Powerpoint presentation, complete with whirling graphics, on 'Moving the Charter Forward'.

The Conference also agreed a number of amendments to the Charter – the first was to amend the reference to 'domestic violence' and change it to 'domestic and other violence'; the second was to include lesbian, bisexual and trans women in the Charter; and the third was to include women's pensioner poverty.

I reported to the Conference on the 2007 International Women's Day event held by ASLEF's WCC in Birmingham. ASLEF had a women's pension petition and WCC members were shocked at the amount of older people who refused to sign up. It was also shocking to discover that less than 11% of women pensioners receive a full State Pension.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all my sisters and brothers in ASLEF a happy International Women's Day on 8 March – and look forward to it being a Bank Holiday for all UK workers.

Wendy Hurst

WCC Member - District 5

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MAKE SURE YOUR VOTE IS REGISTERED ON TIME!

YOU need to register by 16 April to vote in the London elections on 1 May. These elections will determine who will be the next Mayor of London as well as the 25 members of the Greater London Assembly (GLA). ASLEF encourages members living in Greater London to vote for Ken Livingstone – and ensure that the anti-trade union Boris Johnson doesn't get the chance to wreck the city.

The first priority, however, is to make sure

everyone has the right to vote – London has one of the worst records for voter registration in the country.

GET ON THE LIST

Paying council tax doesn't automatically include you on the electoral register. ASLEF members who are not on the electoral register need to fill in a registration form and return it to their borough's elections office by 16 April 2008. Unfortunately each London borough has a different registration form –

but you can either download one or obtain one from your local borough's election office. The deadline for postal vote applications is 16 April, while proxy vote applications have to be submitted by 23 April.

THREE PAPERS

Each voter will receive three ballot papers.

The first two are for the London Assembly elections. One is to elect a local Constituency Member and the other for the London-wide 'top-up' list.

There are 25 London Assembly Members. 14 are Constituency Assembly Members (who represent different areas in London) and 11 are London-wide Assembly Members (who represent London as a whole).

The yellow ballot paper lists the candidates standing for election in your local area, while the orange one is the same for everyone in London.

The third ballot paper is for London Mayor. You have first and second choice votes. If you only mark a first choice, your vote will be counted. You don't have to cast your second choice vote – but making it cannot reduce the chance of your first choice candidate being successful. If you only mark a second choice vote and not a first choice vote, your second choice vote will not be counted.

For further details of the candidates in your area please contact James McGowan, ASLEF's political advisor on 0207 317 8600 or jmcgowan@aslef.org.uk



WIN SOME QUICK READS!

IT'S World Book Day on 6 March – and the trade union movement will once again be supporting Quick Reads, the initiative to help adults pick up the reading habit. Quick Reads are specially written, short books by well-known authors – and cost just £1.99 each. Over three-quarters of a million have been sold since 2006 – including 20,000 distributed to trade union members through unionlearn.

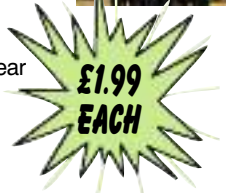
Unions are involved because millions of trade union members don't read as much as they would like. It's a question of finding time, or perhaps they've got out of the habit of reading or lack the confidence or ability to read. Yet reading is not only a vital pleasure, but also crucial to developing skills that can benefit work, career advancement, and home life.

Quick Reads aims to help people along this path.

This year's authors include best selling writers Chris Ryan and Josephine Cox, top athlete Colin Jackson, infamous chef Gordon Ramsay, rugby player Scott Quinnell and Big Issue founder John Bird.

Three ASLEF members can win all seven of the titles published last year simply by dropping a line to Sarah Francis at head office or by emailing her at sfrancis@aslef.org.uk and answering this question:

Q. What popular TV show recently kept Colin Jackson on his toes?
(Full information is available on: www.quickreads.org.uk)



Cathy Peattie and Grahame Smith at the event. Photo: Alan Wylie, provided by STUC

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT INVITE

District organiser Kevin Lindsay and Rail Union Learning Project Worker and ASLEF member Jim Baxter were guests of the STUC at the Scottish Parliament on the evening of 16 January.

The STUC's Skills and Lifelong Learning Team's reception aimed to highlight Scottish Union Learning Fund projects to MSPs, including our union's project. Both Cathy Peattie MSP and Grahame Smith, General Secretary of STUC, spoke enthusiastically about our work in this area.

Kevin and Jim spoke to Graham Smith, Dave Moxham (assistant general secretary of STUC) and numerous MSPs about ASLEF's work on the learning agenda and its aspirations for the future – assuming our new bid for SULF 7 is successful.

THE STUC AND THE NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT

ALONG with Scotland's political parties, civil service and civic organisations, the STUC and trade union movement has entered the new territory of minority government. The belief that this would lead to a more consensual form of government might not have been reflected in parliamentary debates – but it does appear to have influenced the government's approach to working with stakeholders.

Our General Council quickly decided that the STUC should seek to maintain an appropriate level of constructive engagement with the SNP government, underpinned by the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with the previous administration in 2002.

ARC OF PROSPERITY

From discussions with the SNP before the elections, we knew the new government was likely to give high priority to developing constructive working relationships with key stakeholders. The First Minister is fond of referring to the 'arc of prosperity' countries surrounding Scotland: Ireland, Iceland, Norway, Denmark and Finland. He believes that there are lessons Scotland can learn from these countries which, although currently independent, are similar to Scotland in that they are small and on the periphery of Europe.

In most of these countries the government works with representatives of employers and labour to develop and implement economic development policy. It was therefore inevitable – and hardly unwelcome – that the new Scottish government would seek to work closely with the STUC.

The MoU was revised to reflect the new government's priorities and the document was signed off when the First Minister, Alex Salmond, visited the General Council last December.

NEW UNDERSTANDINGS

The revised MoU says, 'The STUC and the Scottish Government will work together

Last year's Scottish Parliament elections marked a new departure for Scottish politics. The SNP was returned as the largest single party in the Parliament, Labour lost a parliamentary election in Scotland for the first time in over half a century and few local authorities now have a majority administration. **Scottish TUC general secretary Graham Smith** explains how he is working in the new political environment ...



First Minister Alex Salmond sees Scotland within an 'arc of prosperity'

towards the development of a more successful country; one which provides opportunities for all its regions to flourish and for all its people to share in the benefits of increasing and sustainable economic growth.'

One specific shared priorities is 'achieving solidarity, cohesion and sustainability within the context of sustainable economic growth'. This refers to the government's controversial 'target regime' – it has targets for economic growth, for reducing the gap in wealth between Scotland's people and regions, and to reduce emissions.

The STUC has been critical of these targets. Why set targets for things that are not under your control? As a small, open

economy Scotland can be severely affected by events far beyond the remit of the Scottish government. However, we welcomed the targets on sustainability and inequality. It will be interesting to see how the government manages the trade-offs that are inevitable in trying to meet these targets at the same time.

A STRATEGY FOR THE ECONOMY

The targets are included in the Economic Strategy the government published last November. Although this was not subject to a formal consultation, the STUC was invited to a number of discussion-type events to help inform the strategy.

We were aware from the

SNP's manifesto that some policies would conflict sharply with STUC views. We were particularly concerned about plans to reduce (or, in some cases, abolish) local business taxation – and also about plans to introduce targets for reducing 'red-tape' or regulation. These are issues on which all four main parties in Scotland broadly concur – wrongly in our view. We made our case with written submissions and formal meetings with senior officials and economists.

Although the published Strategy was flawed, it wasn't as bad as we had anticipated. The language about regulation was more reasonable; a commitment to introduce a target for competitiveness was dropped; and, although the commitment to reduce business taxation remained, the document was much more considered in its expectations on the impact of proposed cuts.

A FORUM FOR FUTURE DEBATE

The strategy – and our response – formed the main item at our first formal bi-annual meeting with the First Minister in January. We agreed joint statements on skills and health inequalities – but strongly disagreed on energy and business rates.

Another interesting development has been the establishment of a National Economic Forum involving ministers, unions, employers and the voluntary sector, which first met last month. The STUC has long believed that devolution would benefit from effective multilateral engagement with government and we look forward to the NEF developing over time into an effective body.

Of particular interest to ASLEF members will be our developing relationship on transport issues. We are currently preparing to meet the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change – and the future of Scotland's railways will be high on the agenda.

PRIVATE RAILWAYS IN THE DOCK

British railways were nationalised 60 years ago this year – on 1 January 1948. They remained in public hands until privatisation on 1 April 1994. In this article ASLEF member **Andy Viner** examines who has won – and who has lost – as a result of the great train sale ...

WHEN railway companies were nationalised in 1948 it was more for practical than ideological reasons. Most were on the brink on bankruptcy and they were hindering the development of the British economy after the Second World War. The railway network was then – as now – vitally important to our economy, and the (Labour) government view was that you can't plan what you don't control.

40 years on the railways had received massive amounts of public investment that would not have been available without nationalisation. But the Tory government began to question the benefits of public ownership, arguing that nationalised industries were costly to taxpayers and passengers. Public monopolies, it said, were not in our interest and competition would make them efficient.

ON THE RIGHT LINES?

The Conservatives of the 1980's were dominated by an ideology of 'private ownership good, public ownership bad'. They used reports by right wing think-tanks to promote the destruction of collectivism and social responsibility in favour of individ-

ualism and private ownership. That has led us to where we are today.

In 1987 the Adam Smith Institute produced a discussion document on the possibility of privatisation called 'The Right Lines'. The view became that railway privatisation would lead to dramatic reductions of public funding – if not entirely phasing it out. An infrastructure company would build new lines, or re-open closed ones, on commercial grounds. 'Naturally no subsidy would ever be paid should these new lines make a loss' the report said – and it concluded that 'The franchising of local lines as provincial profit-centres will benefit local authorities, taxpayers and passengers alike, in addition to keeping the provincial sector on their toes'.

So, 14 years on, have taxpayers and passengers benefited? Has competition made things more efficient? Has everything turned out as rosy as we were promised?

DID TAXPAYERS GAIN?

The July 2007 government White Paper states 'It has been the taxpayer who for the past several years has funded expenditure increases' and 'taxpayers have stepped in to provide the additional funding'. Since privatisation the taxpayer's proportion of rail cost funding has consistently increased.

- A pattern of 25-35% subsidy in the second half of the 1990's has become 40-50% since 2000.
- Direct subsidy at 2006 prices in 1996/97 was £2 billion, in 2005/06 it was £6 billion. Total spend on renewals between 2000 and 2005/06 has been £14 billion.
- The Railtrack debacle has cost the taxpayer an additional £1.25 billion each year in funding until 2009.
- The government intends to support the private rail companies with direct grants of £14 billion from 2009-2014 (excluding its funding of an additional 1,300 new carriages and £150 million for modernisation of 150 stations).

Getting to the bottom of the total amount by which the government has subsidised the privatisation railway is not easy



LOTTERY TICKET: *Passengers have a confusing choice of fares for the same journey*

because there are other 'grey areas' like the alleged £1 billion unpaid tax by some rail companies.

DID PASSENGERS BENEFIT?

So did passengers benefit? The public performance measure indicates that in 1997/98, 89.78% of trains arrived on time. By 2001 this had dipped to 79.1%. Currently reliability is assessed as 88%. There have been major overcrowding problems, with passengers in excess of capacity standing at 4.1% in 2004.

In real terms over the last decade, fully-flexible first class tickets have increased in price by 46%, while standard open tickets (previously the norm) have increased by 18%. In January 2008 regulated fares increased by 4.8% – 0.6% above inflation. Unregulated fares (60% of the total) increased between 5.8%-14%. On top of this, the complexity of fares has increased since privatisation and they are increasingly designed for passengers to pre-book like air travel.

Finally, the government's planning is based on passengers paying a higher percentage of running a railway in the future

LESS SERVICE FOR MORE MONEY

Those who argued that competition and efficiency would both be benefits were, quite simply, wrong. Privatised rail has not provided a competitive industry with customer choice: it has only transformed the railways into a private monopolies. The increased number of managers, lawyers and non-productive consultants who take money out of our industry makes it less efficient. And the amount of time and money spent on blaming someone else when things go wrong – rather than resolving the problem – is a major issue. The promised benefits of a privatised railway has not materialised.



Former Railtrack CEO Gerald Corbett. *Since privatisation, Railtrack was the focus for passenger complaints about overcrowding, delays, expense and safety*

MEETING THE MINISTER AT ONE – AND LAMENT



In this update on activities on our SQUASH campaign to improve driving cabs, we report on a meeting with rail minister Tom Harris, progress at ONE – and sadly, a lament on the poor condition of 319s ...

SQUASHING UP TO THE MINISTER

The Squash campaign to improve conditions in drivers' cabs continues to make progress. Last month the union held a meeting with Tom Harris, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Transport. A variety of issues were covered, but general secretary Keith Norman ensured the union's concerns about driver cab conditions was to the fore.

Keith insisted to the minister that, 'Although there has been some progress with a number of companies, we still need well-documented and understood minimum standards for cabs – to which employers will be obliged to conform.'

The Minister said it wasn't possible to specify driver cab standards within the franchise agreement, because most franchisees inherit old rolling stock. The role of government, he said, was 'only to enforce health and safety standards'. The union maintains that the government should therefore have an input into what those standards are.

However, Tom Harris did say he is anxious to involve the union in cab development on the Inter-city Express Programme (IEP). 'I would not want to proceed without driver involvement,' he said. He has since written to Keith saying that officials will be in touch to invite ASLEF to meetings on cab design best practice which his department is in the process of setting up.

ONE SQUASH

Andy Morrison, district 5's organiser, has told the Journal that all ONE units should be fitted with air cooling or air conditioning by the summer of 2009. He adds that there will be other cab improvements including the refurbishment of seats.

'The company has now agreed to holding separate and specific Cab Environment meetings each six months,' Andy says. 'I'm pleased at this because it means the issue is



Transport Minister Tom Harris

guaranteed never to go away. It's what we need.'

He added that work is progressing on deciding locations of GSM-R radio equipment and initial consultation has taken place with reps. Also a refurbishment package is now due to begin for Class 90/DVT which is intended to replace all drivers' seats, after trials and feedback from members. There are also plans to refurbish the second man's seat and to refurbish the drivers' desk.

'Work is continuing to address problems with the Power Brake Controller on the Class 170. We have reports that on some units this is very stiff to operate. When modifications are agreed, they will be applied to all units,' Andy says. 'We're also looking for changes to the air conditioning which currently pumps air directly on to the driver's head! Some seats need replacing – and we've told the company this.'

Financial approval has been given to fit some form of air conditioning or spot air cooling to 156s and 153s. Two units will be fitted for trials this coming summer with the whole fleet within 12 months. Reps will be invited to inspect the units and give their opinions on the best way forward. The

money has also been approved for similar trials on the Class 317 on similar time-scales – and there will be renewals of all Nose End Vestibule Door seals to reduce noise and water ingress.

If C170 Air Conditioning trials are a success, ONE is committed to fitting air conditioning to the Class 321 if the C170 trials are a success.

'Most 315s have now undergone C6 refurbishments, including air cooling. Feedback from our members has been very positive – a couple have even said they are a pleasure to drive,' Andy reports. However there are still problems with water ingress through the vestibule doors and we are still examining possibly repositioning the cab heater from behind the driver's head.

'All in all, I'm pleased at the progress we've been making. A year ago the company said it didn't intend to fit air cooling to Class 317 units – and that it wasn't possible to fit Class 15x units. Now the vast majority of units operated by ONE will be fitted at least with air cooling by the summer of 2009.'

LAMENT

JOHN FOLEY of the Bedford Branch works for First Capital Connect, often driving the class 319 EMUs that are operated by First Capital Connect on their Thameslink route. He says he has terrible problems with the tip-up seats and the driving position.

'The tip-up seats have inadequate lumbar support, poor seat angles, horrendously cramped footwells and narrow DSD treadles. This means bad posture and a twisted spine. The seat back can't be adjusted to a supportive position (for me at least), and the armrests are pointless except for a couple which were modified a couple of years ago. These chairs would not be tolerated in offices.'

John thinks the only solution would be to rebuild the driving cabs on all class 319/320/321/322/456 units by moving the rear bulkhead back and losing a row of airline-style seating in the passenger saloon. Then a proper pedestal-style seat could be accommodated, with a wider footwell and DSD treadle. Some provision

ER, PROGRESS TING THE 319



ASLEF will be consulted on cab design best practice Photo: Association of Train Operating Companies

NG THE 319 CABS

for standing while driving could also be beneficial – currently impossible for taller drivers.

'The conditions in my cab contributed to my being off work for five months last year. My GP advised me to take anti-inflammatory tablets, to rest and find myself an osteopath – which I did at my own expense. I have also spent a considerable amount of money and time tracking down aids to help my back. It's cost me in excess of £500.

'I've reported this to the company several times – the response has been minimal. When I resumed work they carried out a partial risk assessment. I say 'partial' because the gentleman carrying out the assessment assured me he would come out on a ride with me in January – and I've not seen him since! My formal driver's report has received a very blank response.

I think it's criminal that TOCs can impose such conditions on drivers, particularly on long and exhausting driving turns. I'd like to

see more drivers' reports submitted on the issue.'

John adds that drivers are supposed to 'look back' until the platform's been cleared when we leave stations – but on a 319 this would mean twisting the spine while being perched on the dreadful tip-up seat – with one foot on the DSD pedal! If you repeat this 100 times a day, the risks are obvious. Also certain locations require an offside departure from an island platform – so you can't 'look back' beyond the safety check once the doors have been closed and interlock gained.

'The problem seems to have been solved on later trains like Southern's 77 Electrostars which use the excellent CCTV screens in the cab. I can't imagine such equipment will be retro-fitted to older trains like the 319,' John says. He advises all drivers to submit reports, support the Squash campaign – and adhere to the 'What can members do?' advice on the ASLEF website.



RSSB REPORT ON RAIL-ROAD

INTERFACE The RSSB has published a Road-Rail Interface safety performance report which investigates the full extent of the risk that arises where roads and railways meet. In previous reports the RSSB has focused on level crossings alone – but now it adds data on bridge strikes and incursion incidents involving bridges, boundary fences and access points..

Some main facts include

- There were 10 accidental fatalities at level crossings between January and September 2007. Three road vehicle occupants were killed in accidents (two in the same incident). The remaining seven fatalities were pedestrians struck by trains.
- There were nine collisions between trains and road vehicles over the same period.
- There was a 6% increase in the number of bridges struck between January and September 2007, compared to 2006.
- Incursions via bridges, including those where a vehicle crashes through a fence on the approach to a bridge (resulting in it being struck by a train), occur around twice a year.
- There are typically between 40 and 50 incursions by road vehicles through fences each year.
- The number of vandalism incursions (deliberate access to the infrastructure) has fallen over the period 2003-2006 by 58%, although 2007 has seen an increase of 56% over the first nine months.

Accidents occurring at the road-rail interface (including level crossings, vehicles and pedestrians, bridges access points and fences) account (on average) for 13.4 fatalities and weighted injuries (FWIs) per year, or approximately 7% of the total system risk. (This excludes the risk from suicide).

The full report is available on the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) website www.rssb.co.uk

NEW HAZARDS AT WORK AVAILABLE ON LINE

The new edition of the TUC's 25-year old safety publication 'Hazards at Work' will, for the first time have a significant part of its contents available online.

'It's a positive development to put this valuable information on-line,' says the union's safety advisor Dave Bennett. 'The guide has useful chapters on the positive impact that unions can have on health and safety at work and UK laws on safety. It also sets out how union reps can tackle the various safety hazards they encounter in the workplace.'

Paper copies can be obtained from TUC Publications (0207 467 1294) or from the TUC website www.tuc.org.uk/publications <<http://www.tuc.org.uk/publications>.

CHANCE FOR BRANCH SECRETARIES TO SHARPEN THEIR SKILLS!

The union has organised courses in the North and South of England to help equip branch secretaries and other new branch officials to be fully effective in the role they have taken on. The courses will be held on

- 14 – 16 April at Northern College in Barnsley
- 28 – 30 May at Esher Conference and Training Centre in Esher, Surrey

The courses will concentrate on the whole range of skills branch officers will need from the organisation of meetings, putting together a case, using head office resources and understanding ASLEF policies.

Are they useful? They are according to Newton Heath branch secretary David Vaughan who attended a similar course last year and said, 'I often refer to notes that I was given or that I took on the course. It let me make a big leap from being a local (and new) activist to feeling I was part of something much larger and more powerful. Every Branch Secretary should go on one of these courses.'

- For more information, or to apply for these courses, contact the union's education and training organiser Julie Weekes at head office (020 7317 8600) or jweeks@aslef.org.uk

MARCH PROTESTS TO FOCUS ON OSANLOO

The International Transport Federation, the TUC and Amnesty International have asked the union to focus its activities on Rail Action Day (6 March) on the plight of imprisoned Iranian trade unionist Mansour Osanloo, rather than continue with the activities we had planned around UK rail finance.

Osanloo is being held in Tehran's Evin prison for no other crime than being a trade unionist. An elected leader of his transport union, he has been attacked, arrested and had his tongue sliced as a warning against speaking out.

'By campaigning for Osanloo's freedom we will be standing up for the human rights of all Iranians and for the many thousand trade unionists imprisoned in countries across the globe,' Keith Norman says. 'Our movement will not be free until they are all released.'

BOOST FOR BRUM

Birmingham New Street is to receive £400 million of public money towards a major revamp. The whole Gateway scheme is expected to cost around £550 million. It is believed that the announcement is in part an attempt to stave off anger from the UK's second largest city when London's St Pancras was refurbished recently at a cost of over £800 million. The scheduled completion date for the work is April 2014.

TUBE MOVES 4.17 MILLION IN A SINGLE DAY

Passenger records on the London Underground hit a new high on 7 December last year. The Tube's busiest day ever saw around 4.17 million Tube users! The previous high was just 4 million on 8 December the previous year. A new record for weekend numbers was established on 1 December when almost 3 million people travelled by Tube.

KELLY VAGUELY OUTLINES ROLLING STOCK PLANS

Ruth Kelly has announced the rolling stock plans she says will enable Network Rail to prepare for the extra 1,300 carriages – covering items like the lengthening of platforms. Like many government announcements, however, the plans don't go heavy on details about rolling stock fleets or exact dates for their introduction, but it gives some more information about how rolling stock will be used to deliver increased capacity. The objective is to add an additional 100,000 rail seats a day.

Last year's Rail White Paper sets out to carry 180 million more passengers over the next seven years – growth of over 20%. It also seeks to double capacity over the next 30 years.

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Sadness and celebration at Wolves

THE December meeting of the Wolverhampton branch was touched by both sadness and celebration.

The sadness came from the news that our close colleague and friend Graham 'Tonka' Tomkiss from Shrewsbury had passed away after a short illness. Branch members stood for a minute's silence for Tonka before holding a collection for the Lingen Davies Cancer Relief Fund. A total of £180 was raised for the charity, which is close to the Tomkiss family's heart. He will be sadly missed by his friends in Wolverhampton. We have many good memories from work and weekend schools in Torquay. We'll miss you 'mon'.

In contrast we celebrated the retirement of Roy Goodhead, our branch chairman, after 50 years on the railways and over 20 in the chair of our branch. We were pleased to welcome many colleagues from other depots who had come to see Roy sign



A fond and festive farewell for Roy: pictured are (back left to right) M. Boulanger, S. Goode, D. Andrews, N. Harkness (front) Roy and Sandra Goodhead

off (plus sample the selection in the 'Great Western'!).

There were a couple of surprises for Roy. Firstly we'd invited his partner Sandra to join us for the last half hour when the business finished. Then, just as he was about to close the meeting we presented him with a bench

morticer for his workshop. He closed the meeting in emotional style.

On behalf of the branch I'd like to say what a pleasure it was to serve alongside Roy – and we wish him good health in his retirement.

Nigel Harkness Secretary –
Wolverhampton Branch

Brother Baxter leaves the street



Andy Morrison (foreground) makes a presentation to Mick

On 19 January the Liverpool Street Welfare and Social Club hosted a retirement function for Mick Baxter, a colleague who retired in November

after 40 years and 6 months service. Mick started his career at Stratford on 22 May 1967. He spent his entire career at the depot until 1994 when

Stratford closed and Mick moved to Liverpool Street.

Mick finished his time driving Intercity services between Liverpool Street and Norwich for One Railway, having served time with British Rail and Anglia Railways. He served on the Anglia Railways Drivers Company Council between 2001 and 2004, and has played a very active role on the pensions committee for some years.

The function was very well attended by colleagues wanting to wish him all the very best wishes for a long, happy and healthy retirement. Following presentations from the Club, ASLEF regional organiser Andy Morrison and Steve Wright from the One Railway Drivers Company Council presented Mick with his certificate from the union, and made rather touching speeches about Mick. He is a friend we will miss very much – although we will no doubt catch up with him from time to time over a pint or two!

John Thorpe Secretary – LSW&SC

Always a welcome at Chingford

CHINGFORD Branch's regular monthly meeting on 15 January was made something of a special occasion by Bro Bill Dale collecting his retirement certificate from district 5 EC member Nigel Gibson. Bill retired after 46 years service and almost 40 years of ASLEF membership, during which he held many union positions including District Council President.

Accepting his certificate, Bill outlined some of the actions he took in the past to help the members of this union obtain better pay and working conditions – and he outlined some of the scrapes he had endured with management to help achieve these goals.



Nigel Gibson presents Bill Dale with his retirement certificate

Unfortunately Keith Norman had to pull out of the function due to urgent business – but he's promised to pay us a visit in the near future.

One concern raised at the meeting was our difficulty in attracting new ASLEF recruits to branch meetings. I always ensure that the meetings and locations are well advertised on depot notice boards. I urge newer members to come along

– it's your union and your views will always be catered for – so don't feel intimidated! I'm available at Chingford along with our local reps, so remember – You are the future of this union! You are tomorrow's LDS and health and safety reps! So take the plunge and find out what we are about at Your Branch!!

S. P. Jestico Secretary –
Chingford branch

A big thanks to Wolves stalwarts

WE would like to place on record this Wolverhampton Branch's sincere thanks and appreciation for the work that Brothers A. Macinnes and R. Hodson carried out in their respective positions of Virgin West Coast company council Secreary and Chairman. They have done sterling work on our behalf for many years.

Further we look forward to knowing that in the future – in their positions as elected Company Council Representatives for Liverpool and Wolverhampton 236 branches – they will continue to insist on a safe working environment whilst re-affirming Society policy on protecting conditions and safeguarding our members' jobs.

Nigel Harkness Secretary –
Wolverhampton Branch



Stan Moran presents Bro Graham Hughes with his 30 year ASLEF badge

Long service in Aylesbury

IT IS with great pleasure that I enclose a picture of Bro Graham Hughes of the Aylesbury branch receiving his badge to mark his 30 years of ASLEF membership. This long service badge and Aylesbury Centenary tie and badge were presented by our district organiser Stan Moran who we were delighted to receive as a guest at our branch on the last day of January.

Norwich 18 April reunion

THE Norwich branch's Retired Members' Annual Reunion will be held on 18 April at the Arkwright Social Club in Hall Road, Norwich. The bar and buffet will be provided free of charge by the Loco Welfare Fund – to whom we 'old timers' are extremely grateful.

Last year the event drew over 80 retired rail workers, and this year two retired ASLEF members are travelling from Australia and Spain to be with us – but we've still not managed to track down the elusive Bob Lily!

All branches with retired members who'd like to meet up with old friends from the district will be made most welcome.

John Pipe
RMS – Norwich

Hither thither

THE next Hither Green Reunion will be held at the Railwaymen's Club in Beacon Road, Hither Green on Friday 2 May



Left to right Brian, Eric & Dick Llong

ASHFORD CHARACTERS: I WAS delighted to be invited to the South Eastern Reunion at Ashford on 17 January. It was especially pleasing to find a good sprinkling of colleagues in their 80s and 90s giving the old pension a bashing!

I was introduced to three retired Ashford men – Brian, Eric & Dick Llong – who told me of their family association with the railway.

George Llong, their father, was a station master who covered a number of stations on the South Eastern, and their mother was a booking clerk – so I suppose it was inevitable that their sons would become railway employees.

Dick started on the footplate at Ashford Shed in 1948, Eric in 1951 and Brian in 1954. Brian and Eric spent their entire careers at Ashford moving from cleaner and fireman to driver – amassing over half a century in ASLEF in the process! Dick, like many of us, was called to serve the Queen before returning to Ashford Shed. He then moved to supervisory and other grades as well as helping to run the BRSA Club.

But their history doesn't stop there. Their grandfather was the station master at West St Leonards, their Uncle Bill was a station master at Cannon Street, one of their mum's sisters was a booking clerk at Addiscombe, her husband was a gas fitter based at East Croydon, and their mum's cousin was a steward on the Golden Arrow!

We're all looking forward to meeting again on 3 April at Ramsgate.

Peter Smith Reporter – RMS

The 1908 Journal reported on Barry drivers taking action in defiance of both management and the EC – while 50 years ago the Cold War was showing no signs of thaw

100 YEARS AGO

In March 1908 Organising Secretary W. Warwick reported on bother in Barry ...

".....I received a letter from Mr. Fox to visit Barry, as things were then in a very unsettled state, in fact a telegram I received said "Trouble brewing". When I got there I found it not only brewing, but brewed, and the men were worked up to such a pitch that something had to be done and done quickly.

A meeting of our members was called for the Sunday morning, at which, after hearing explanations from several of our members, I reviewed the position, gave some advice, and begged our members not to take any extreme measures until our E.C. had an opportunity of considering the matter, and to keep within the meaning of the rules and so avoid any unpleasantness in the future. As a result a resolution was passed instructing the secretary to ask Mr.Fox for the consent of our E.C. for the members to take any action necessary to enable them to remove they tyranny they had for a long time been labouring under.....

.....A mass meeting was called for the afternoon, at which this decision was made known and received with open arms by the men; but instead of our own members exercising a little patience and giving our E.C. time to deal

with the matter, so that everything might be in order as to representation etc.....a large majority at the mass meeting, including our members, signed their notices there and then, and handed them to Mr. Bell, who presented them to the general manager at 10 o'clock on Monday morning, thus leaving the Associated outside their consideration, and I suppose we shall be asked in the near future what the Associated did for the Barry men."

50 YEARS AGO

A. Patterson, the Organising Secretary of District No.2, conveyed the despondency and stress of living through the Cold War in the March 1958 Journal ...

"The first few weeks of 1958 have brought nothing to inspire us towards light-heartedness in viewing the world prospect, but rather to cause us to be profoundly disturbed. The letters passing to and fro between Heads of Governments bring out in sharp relief how acute the tension is between East and West. With the erection of rocket-launching bases on the east coast, the people of Scotland, and indeed the people of the whole of these islands, have cause for anger, and a very real urge to bestir themselves, for unless our rulers are forced by the will of the people to talk peace, we can only be faced with a nuclear deluge, bringing in its train terror and extinction."



Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott

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THE PASSING OF TWO PATHFINDERS

IT IS with great sadness I have to report the passing of yet another two Ripple Lane Pathfinders – Brothers George Herring and Gerry Greene.

George was in his early 70s when he passed away. He started his career at Plaistow steam depot in East London, where he no doubt rubbed shoulders with the now-famous Joe Brown – but without the Bruvvers.

When electrification came to the LT&S in the early 1960's, George transferred to the newly-opened Ripple Lane Depot. He remained at Ripple Lane until its closure, when he opted to take retirement. George was a confirmed bachelor who will always be remembered for being one of the elite minority of drivers at the depot who would wear the regulation BR hat. I'm sure he will be sorely missed by all, and especially the retired lads who meet once a month at the LT club at Hornchurch – where he often aired his views. Our sincere condolences go out to George's sister and family.

Gerry Greene died at the young age of 52. He really was a lovely bloke. He came over from Ireland and started his career as a secondman at Ripple Lane and then progressed to become a driver. When Ripple Lane closed Gerry moved to East Ham Depot on the LT&S, and after privatisation moved to Freightliners at Tilbury.

Not long after Gerry arrived he was diagnosed with diabetes, and became the resident depot shunt pilot driver. It was only in 2006 that he was told that he had leukaemia and in late 2007 he received a bone marrow transplant. All seemed to be going well, but sadly he passed away peacefully in Basildon Hospital on Sunday 20 January.

Gerry enjoyed the odd tittle and a good discussion about football. He will always be remembered for some of his greetings. Most are unprintable! – but one does come to mind, 'How are we Spunko!'

Family, friends, neighbours, work mates and management packed the crematorium to pay their last respects. He was a true gentleman who will be sadly missed. Once again our sincere condolences go out to Gerry's family.

CLIFF BLACKWELL Reporter – Tilbury Branch

OBITUARIES

LEN EYTON DIES AT 83

LEN EYTON, who was born in 1925, served as a driver from 1941 until he retired in 1987.

He died at his home on 29 January. During his time as a driver he proved his ASLEF credentials by taking up a number of LDC positions.

Our thoughts are with Len's wife Maureen, daughter Jill and son Rob.

Alex Lakic Secretary –
Rugby branch

TOM MOULT: A TRUE CHARACTER

IT IS with great sadness that I am reporting the passing away of Bro Tommy Moul. Tommy was an 'old-school' railwayman – and in true Waterloo tradition typified the railway's great characters.

Tom, who would have celebrated his sixtieth birthday later this year, gave 45 years' service to the southern region, starting 'on the steam' at Nine Elms and then moving up to Waterloo in 1967.

Having been ill for some time he eventually lost his battle with cancer on Sunday 13 January. Tom had recently retired under ill health but his death brings home just how much his jovial presence will be missed around the depot.

Although gone, Tom will not be forgotten. His memory will live on for as long as the many stories of his antics are recounted – and that will be many years.

Tom's funeral service was held at Kingston Crematorium on Monday 21 January and was extremely well attended.

He leaves behind his daughter, his son – and countless friends.

Marz Colombini Secretary
– Waterloo Nine Elms Branch

Short Rails

RAIL GROWTH 'DEPENDENT ON JOBS'

Financial reports last month warned that rail profits have a direct link to the state of the economy. During the last recession of the early 1990s, falling levels of employment saw rail passenger volumes and revenues drop four years in a row – the former by more than five per cent alone in 1994, the worst year of the downturn.

STATION UPGRADES IN PROSPECT

Rail Minister Tom Harris has announced additional funding for upgrades to railway stations across England and Wales.

The Department for Transport's (DfT) £370m



'Access for All' programme funds the redevelopment of station infrastructure to provide step-free access from the station entrance to platforms – as well as facilities such as improved lighting, hearing induction loops and passenger information screens.

40 more stations are due to benefit, including Stalybridge, Rotherham, Walthamstow Central, Peterborough, Hemel Hempstead, Canterbury West, Alnmouth and Severn Tunnel Junction.

NTP 'HAVE STOP AND SEARCH TARGETS'

Edinburgh's Evening News says that it was told by two British Transport Police officers that they have unofficial targets for the number of people they stop and search under anti-terror laws. The officers said they had been threatened with the sack if they did not meet targets. More than 4000 people have been stopped at Edinburgh's Haymarket and Waverley stations since last July.



YOU TELL US

These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB or by email to journal@aslef.org.uk

Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can.

This month we continue our STAR LETTER feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

PUSSIES GALORE!

AS A young driver in the early 1970's a lot of my time was spent in the mess room at Willesden Brent waiting to relieve on various freight trains from the north. On the engine line, the messing facilities were basic, the building was typical LMR, built like Hitler's Bunker. Inside the brick work was gloss painted, and you had a Baby Belling Cooker, a cast iron kettle which was constantly boiling (early sauna) for heating, the lockers to sit on looked as if they had been liberated from a Queen Mary Brake Van, plus a table.

The highlight of the day was when the charge man, Mr King (aka Kingy,) the biggest and gentlest black guy you would ever wish to meet, would stand at the mess room door and start calling out names, like Zooooooo, Shaaaaarby, and many more.

All of a sudden the mess room would be filled by at least 12 feral cats who would arrive for feeding and watering by this great man

who was like the Pied Pier. As soon as they were fed and watered they would all disappear as quickly as they came!

In the cold winter months some of the elderly ones would enjoy Kingy's hospitality and kip in his warm office. I still get over the High Level regularly to this day, but never see a cat.

I wonder what happened to them all, bless' em.

Driver Cliff Blackwell –
Freightliner Heavy Haul –
Dagenham (and cat owner of
14 years plus)

UNITE FOR FREE TRAVEL

IN THE Feb edition of ASLEF Journal, there are numerous letters regarding free travel for 'un-safeguarded' drivers. They argue that the unions should get together to make free travel available to all drivers.

Is it not fair to try to get free travel for all rail employees – and not just drivers who joined after privatisation? You would get more support from the other rail unions if this was the case.

Simon Chamberlain –
Wigan Wallgate.

BRANCH MEETINGS BEST FOR DEBATE

I READ with interest Bro Brian Jones' letter of thanks after his six years as one of our DDC reps. There is no doubt that being a DDC rep is a tough task, because you're

never going to please all the people all the time – but, regardless of the issue, it is unacceptable for any ASLEF member to make personal attacks on DDC reps. The best place to 'vent your spleen' is at your local branch meetings. The trouble is that too many members have plenty to say in the mess room – but if they're not working when their branch is meeting, they are waylaid by the attractions of 'Eastenders' or 'Coronation Street'!

That said, our DDC do seem to be unaware of the expectations and aspirations of FGW drivers. It baffles me how they thought it would be suitable to offer a two-tier contract for leave and Sunday working. HSS drivers were being asked to pay for the pay rises of two other two business modules' drivers' pay rises – but that is FGW's responsibility, not ours.

The economy is uncertain, and despite what the government say, inflation is rising. How much has the cost of petrol/diesel risen in the last few months alone? So why lock us into a deal with no mechanism to protect us if prices continue to rise? I am happy for harmonisation to be brought in – we are all drivers after all – but First Group are making massive profits. Surely a deal that benefits everyone would do wonders for morale, as well as going some way to repairing relations between management and their

drivers.

Let us hope that things improve. Perhaps we should remind FGW that this is a 'blue riband' franchise. It's Brunel's work for heavens sake! – and should be the benchmark for others to emulate. He must be spinning in his grave!

So: I hope to see you at the next branch meeting. They are held on the second Monday of each month at 1900 at the GWRSA, on the incline on the way into Temple Meads. Solidarity comrades!

Andy Castle – Bristol FGW
HSS

DIARY MAPS

WHILE I agree with Driver Scott ('Is ASLEF still backing freight?' Letters, January Journal) that our diary should have rail maps – could we ensure that they are up-to-date and not the embarrassingly out-of-date ones that appeared in previous diaries?

Graham Martin-Royle Driver
– Hastings

... AND AGAIN!

PLANNING a football trip with my son to see Cardiff City play WBA at the Hawthorns, I thought I'd check my ASLEF diary for the local lines around the Midlands. What did I find? UK road maps! I thought we were train drivers!

Come on, ASLEF! Give us our train maps back next year!

Richie Jones – Cardiff

RECYCLING THE JOURNAL

I JUST thought this might be an idea. Many councils, including Cheshire, where I live, can now recycle polythene outer packaging from magazines sent in the post – but only if there is no ink or colour on them.

Could you look into sending out the magazine in the same outer packaging but with no colour or ink on it? The address could be printed on an A4 sheet which could then be re-cycled. A lot of magazines are sent out this way now.

I suppose the best solution is to email the magazine, but I appreciate that not everyone wants that – or indeed has an email address.

Jez Cox Arriva Trains Wales – Chester





100 YEARS OF THE STATE PENSION

THIS year – 2008 – is a special anniversary. It is the centenary of the first state pension.

Back in 1908 it was a lordly 5 shillings a week! Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time, said that any man who contributed his health, strength, vigour and skills to the creation of the wealth of the nation should be rewarded in his old age.

100 years on we still have pensioner poverty in the UK, the country with the lowest state retirement pension in Europe. It is low also in relation to the increasing wealth of the nation since 1908.

At the start of 2008, the single state pensioner gets £87.30 and a married couple £139.60. 85% of women pensioners do not receive their full state pension.

Get behind the pensioners this year – support the National Pensioners Convention and make sure our pensions at least match European levels!

J. P. Begley RMS – formerly Kings Cross branch

THANKS BRUM ASLEF

THROUGH the Journal, may I express my sincere thanks to Angie Butler and Tim Inston for their help following my wife's recent illness. Thanks also to Bill Goode for always being available and finding time to listen.

I'm pleased to say my wife appears to be much better. Once again, many thanks.

B. Sumner – Birmingham

LET'S BUILD ON SOLIDARITY

ON behalf of Bro A.M. Parkes and Woking Branch we wish to place on record our thanks and appreciation of the sterling support and solidarity shown by ASLEF branches and members right across South West Trains. The efforts of our District Secretary, Graham Morris, and our EC member Simon Weller, must also be commended.

Bro Parkes was re-instated at a Clause 9 appeal hearing on 15 January – and the collective show of solidarity by all SWT members, reps and officers throughout his ordeal was a true reflection of everything our Society stands for.

We now need to ensure this solidarity and mutual understanding continues on SWT. Many challenges lie ahead for ASLEF members and representatives. Some will be collective and others

will involve excessive discipline on individual members, as happened in this case. We must continue to stand as a collective united force and react with similar resolve, dignity and support to ensure that justice and fairness prevail.

Once again – many thanks for your support and solidarity.

Mick Berg Secretary – Woking Branch

BACK A YEAR AFTER A FATALITY

I WOULD like to thank you for the cheque I received in settlement of my claim following a fatality I had in May 2006. The stress and trauma of the incident resulted in my being off work for more than a year – putting financial pressure on both my family and myself.

I have now started back at work and with re-training I hope to be able to return to my normal duties as a driver. I would like to thank Jennifer Clarke of Thompsons solicitors, who handled my claim, along with Care First and the NHS for the counselling and friendly advice that has helped me to return to work. Thanks to you all!

J. Brailsford – Lincs

DISHARMONY IN BRIGHTON

I'M writing in response to the FCC Company Council letter

in February's Journal. In October I wrote to you concerning the reality of harmonisation within FCC. Although you said it would be printed in December – it wasn't.

Instead there was an article extolling the virtues of harmonisation and a letter from a FGW rep encouraging members to vote for harmonisation at FGW. If you'd printed my letter it would have given FGW members something to consider when deciding whether to vote yes or no.

The FCC council have missed the point. The cause of the anger and mistrust is not the harmonisation deal (which we voted to accept) – but the fact that after 'interpretation' meetings with union officials the deal implemented is significantly different to that voted on. As a result one company council has been voted out – and others may follow.

If anyone would like to read my original letter, email me at stephen.cork3@btopenworld.com and I will forward it.

Steve Cork – FCC – Brighton

BOYLE BOILS

AFTER five years in ASLEF, I've never been so angry as when I read the February Journal. On page 6, there is a fairly small article on how 75.4% of my brothers & sisters at FGW voted in favour of industrial action with

YOU TAKES YOUR CHOICE, YOU PAYS YOUR MONEY

I WRITE in response to Tim Stedman's letter in the February 2008 Journal regarding staff travel. I agree that if employed in the rail industry, rail travel should be free to all, not just train drivers – but as regards to being discriminated against for joining the railway after 31 March 1996, I have to strongly disagree.

I joined the railway in 1990 as a railway trainee with a wage of about £76 a week. This came with the perk of free rail travel. In 1998 just before DRI was agreed, a driver's wage had risen to £222.15p a week before tax. Wages weren't so appealing when the railway was in the public sector.

Unfortunately – like it or not – we now work in the private sector. When, in 2000, I chose to move to a different TOC, I lost 10 years seniority. Does this mean I'm being discriminated against – because I chose to move to a different TOC? No! – because it was my choice! So if we all get free rail travel, then surely we should all keep our seniority? (Then when they close my depot in December I might get my 1st choice for relocation rather than my 3rd!) I'm sure if I worked for Easy Jet I wouldn't get free or discounted flights with British Midland.

A. Gregg – Brighton branch



Pensions Commission doesn't meet our objectives

IS THE Final Report from the Railway Pensions Commission the first step towards running down the Railway Pension Scheme?

The proposals do not address the four key trade union objectives – and, if agreed, they would create yet more division in our industry along the lines of the discriminatory staff travel concessions.

Just as many non-safeguarded staff find it cheaper to use their cars instead of their less favourable travel concessions, these pension scheme proposals are likely to make it more expensive than it is worth to be in a pension scheme. Even those members with the 'indefeasible right' will be affected when there are so few people left in the Final Salary scheme that it might become unsustainable. While this is possibly good news for the employers, it's definitely bad news for rail workers.

Are our employers looking for a scheme that would cost them nothing – a scheme that would inflate their profits and increase the dividends they pay to shareholders while we rail workers give up yet more of our conditions and meet all the expense? To an outsider that might seem

entirely reasonable – after all, why should we not make provision for our own pension?

But it is not that simple! Previous union members fought on behalf of all of us for what we have today – they were not handed anything on a plate. The pay, conditions and pensions we have would be much worse were it not for them. We should be building on what we still have, not letting it be taken away or watered down to such an extent that it is too unattractive to be part of.

Our representatives at all levels in the union should, as the GS says, continue to push for the pension provision that rail workers deserve. But we all need to be ready to put our case as forcefully as necessary because, once our pension scheme is gone, it is gone for good. If anyone needs proof of that look no further than what the same companies have done to the UK bus industry pension schemes. The remaining ones are all worse off now.

We want a final salary scheme that everyone can join, wants to join and can afford to join. Our elected representatives should settle for nothing less.

JIM PETERS – King's Cross Branch

a line from regional organiser Stan Moran about 'a ringing endorsement of the union's position.'

The strength of feeling was because of the insulting harmonisation package put before the members – which ASLEF, from the EC to the negotiating team – recommended we accept. We responded with a 65% vote against the recommendation.

After the rejection no drivers I know in the LTV branch of the company were approached for their opinions on what would be acceptable. The result is a level of animosity I've never known in a union..

ASLEF is there to represent us, to get the best deal for us, not acquiesce to

management. I implore ASLEF to be more truthful when reporting items, and to start talking to its members, and listening to us first – and management second.

Brian Boyle –
Oxford

HELP WITH BADGE CATALOGUE SOUGHT

I AM trying to catalogue all the railway and union-related badges that have been struck over the years. Although I don't intend to publish the catalogue commercially, I want to make it a reasonable record and as full as possible. That is why I would like to appeal to ASLEF members for either spare issues that I could buy - or good quality photographs of

badges that I can put into the catalogue.

My collection is some 700 – 800 badges, but I'm sure there are still a vast number that I am missing, or don't know about.

The 1982 strike and the loss of the 8-hour day meant a lot to me personally. I won and lost many friends during this crucial time – and that

was to be compacted by the '84/85 miners' strike. Many trade union depots and branches struck badges both to express support and to raise funds for those who needed help.

I attach my address in case any members can offer me assistance.

A. Pentney, 7 The Poplars,
Ratby, Leicestershire LE6 0LZ

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

To advertise in the ASLEF Journal please contact Sarah Francis on 020 7317 8600 or sfrancis@aslef.org.uk



ASLEF-NUM BADGES – newly struck to support the Justice for Mineworkers campaign. These double-sided badges cost £5 plus £1 p&p and are available from Ray Cooper at 94 Cloonmore Ave, Orpington, Kent BR6 9IQ

ROLL UP! ROLL UP! The ASLEF Retired Members Section (RMS) have launched their Grand Prize Draw. Top prize is £1,000 with 2nd and 3rd prizes of £500 and £200. There are also prizes of tickets to Paris by Eurostar and ASLEF regalia so don't miss out. Tickets are available from Alan Taylor. c/o ASLEF Head Office or by email to SAllen@aslef.org.uk

ASLEF TRAIN DRIVER collects ASLEF/railway badges, signs, shed plates, signalling items, etc. Phone Mark on 01562 746537 or (mobile) 07789301551



COLLECTOR requires ASLEF-Coalville NUM 1984/5 strike badges. Will pay £125. Also selling chrome and gilt badges for Wath and Mexborough at £10 the pair. Contact Barry Jones on 01709 588648 or 25 Windermere Close, Mexborough, South Yorkshire S64 0PT.

DIESEL HYDRAULIC ITEMS wanted by collector. Anything considered, especially speedos, power handles etc. Rob 01822 843 150

ORLANDO – fantastic Villa for rent. For details go to: www.thehavenvilla-florida.co.uk or tel : 0208 441 8526.



DOVER CENTENARY BADGE A limited edition of numbered badges were produced to mark our 100 years these are £5 each Plus P+P. The badges are available from Branch Secretary Steve Deen (dover.aslef@virgin.net)

Change of address form

Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Phone.....

Branch.....

Membership No.....

Employer.....

WEAPONS OF MASS COMMUNICATION: THE POWER OF THE POSTER

An exhibition at London's Imperial War Museum until the end of the month demonstrates the immense potential and power of posters – especially in times of war. During the First World War posters were transformed from a tool used by advertisers to a highly effective device used by governments for their war purposes. Since then they have been used equally effectively by anti-war protesters



THE first responsibility of any leader during times of conflict is to win the hearts and minds of the people – and in the First World War the poster was quickly adopted as the weapon of choice in this battle. This exhibition shows how it was used as a platform for the voice of the government – and later taken over as a form of popular protest.

Posters are often called 'the most democratic media'. They're cheap to produce and easily (if sometimes illegally!) displayed. And, as this exhibition shows, they can be stunningly effective. An idea can be conveyed in a single image or a simple slogan of a couple of words. It's a much more direct medium than any carefully argued political thesis. A poster can communicate an idea to someone who isn't paying attention – merely glancing quickly as they walk past.

JOIN UP! The best-known recruiting poster is probably Alfred Leete's 'Kitchener' poster



– 'Your Country Needs You'. Later, however, it was considered that the 'Empire' feel of this advertising was losing appeal, so more subtle methods were invented to encourage fodder to the trenches. Posters appeared showing men in uniforms surrounded by fawning young women – or they stoked up feelings of guilt with images of a child asking, 'Daddy, what did YOU do in the Great War?'

The Germans continued throughout the war to use strong imperial images with their posters displaying eagles, swords and anvils. But the central messages in times of war are the same regardless of which side you're on: the enemy is subhuman; we are

good; the enemy will harm our women and children; but we can win through sacrifice

STOP THE WAR The lessons of 'poster power' were not lost on the anti-Vietnam, peace and anti-nuclear protests from the 60s onwards. One American design deliberately took the Kitchener image and turned it on its head, substituting a skeleton figure with the slogan 'I want you for US army'. It's hard to ignore such a direct message. Another powerful poster was the picture of US flag-covered coffins with the stark slogan, 'Is this what you'd call 'Phased Withdrawal?' Yes, it only portrays one side of the argument, and one single issue: but that is the strength of a

poster. It deals with one idea, head on.

UK NOT LEFT BEHIND The left in the UK did not lag behind the Americans in creating vivid posters. Perhaps the most striking was CND's apocalyptic picture that showed three images laid upon each other: a nuclear explosion, a skull and the CND logo. It is utterly simple and needs no words – yet it works immediately. Even after all these years, it stops you in your tracks. The celebrated designer Peter Kennard came up with another simple but telling image of a missile being crushed by a human hand and the blunt words 'No Cruise Missiles Here'. The fact that it was produced by the Labour Party is a certain sign of the times!

Seeing the Stop The War poster 'No More Lies' in the exhibition makes you realise how familiar it has become: the message seeps in without effort. It is how the best posters work.

Also included in the exhibition are many of the 'politicised' posters of the Cold War period. Some of the most vivid and impressive date from the Spanish Civil War

AD MEN JOIN IN There has always been an uneasy alliance between the advertising industry and the political message. During World War 11, for example, troops were pictured smiling and merry in their trenches because someone had sent them an Oxo cube! But as society becomes accustomed to professional images, the left needs to keep apace – so it is drawn into the world of commercial ad-houses.

If you're interested in how people's opinions can be manipulated by the use of a well-designed poster – this exhibition is well worth a visit.

● **The exhibition of war posters – 'Weapons of Mass Communication' – continues at the Imperial War Museum in London (Elephant and Castle) until the end of the month. Admission is free. For further information go to mail@iwm.org.uk or call 020 7416 5320. Opening times are 10.00 – 18.00**

ASLEF'S legal services – your rights for their wrongs!

FREE LEGAL ADVICE ASLEF also provides first class free legal advice – both for members and for their dependents. In the first six months of this year we have secured £1,442,369 in compensation claims! Call the helpline on 0808 100 8009

EMERGENCIES If you are an ASLEF member who is arrested or being interviewed by the police and need legal assistance – day or night – you can call the members' Emergency Hotline on 07980 996159.

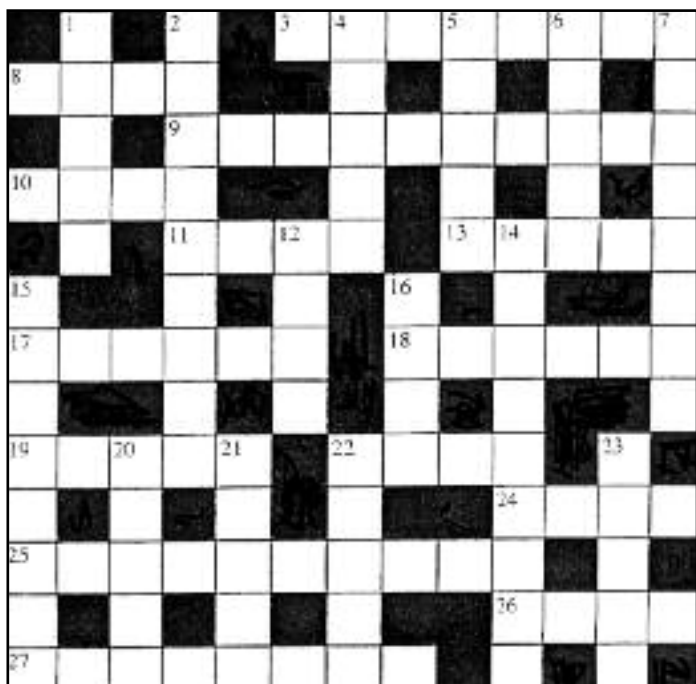
SACKINGS OR OTHER PROBLEMS AT WORK Harassment, discrimination or bullying? If your local, branch or district representative is unavailable, call the Industrial Relations department at union headquarters (020 7317 8600) or email info@aslef.org.uk

ASLEF *more than just a union*



Prize Crossword No. 23

set by TLC



Solution to Crossword No 22 which appeared in the February edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Herbie White** from **Gidea Park, Essex**.

ACROSS 3 Shunters 8 Iran 9 Inspectors 10 Echo 11 Nosy 13 Steve 17 Edward 18 Tonnes 19 Outdo 22 Wave 24 Sash 25 Passengers 26 Eden 27 Emeralds **DOWN** 1 Track 2 Union Card 4 Happy 5 Nicks 6 Erode 7 Suspense 12 Side 14 Tennessee 15 Decouple 16 Etna 20 Taste 21 Opera 22 Waged 23 ASLEF

Thanks for all your responses to the 22nd ASLEF crossword in the February edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

CLUES ACROSS

- 3 Structures built to carry rail and road traffic over valleys (8)
- 8 Upset a liar to run a train (4)
- 9 Wall or bank built to carry railway lines over low ground (10)
- 10 Diesel fuel (4)
- 11 Girl's name (4)
- 13 Device for detecting objects under the sea (5)
- 17 Deep valley (6)
- 18 List of subjects for discussion at the AGM (6)
- 19 Sediment at the bottom of the glass (5)
- 22 Eating place (4)
- 24 Group of players (4)
- 25 One showing intense enjoyment or interest (10)
- 26 Slippery fish (4)
- 27 Transportation by means of railroads (8)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 Competed against the other runners (5)
- 2 Lifting to a higher level (9)
- 4 Reflection or picture (5)
- 5 The of Hazard (TV series) (5)
- 6 Spotless (5)
- 7 Part of the weekend (8)
- 12 Requirement (4)
- 14 You can't make these without breaking eggs! (9)
- 15 An incline (8)
- 16 Initially the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (4)
- 20 Additional (5)
- 21 Sidetrack, move aside (5)
- 22 Middle East city (5)
- 23 Heavy weight rope or wire (5)



MARKS & SPENCER

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

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Address.....

.....Postcode.....

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